

Wellness Notes

High Blood Cholesterol*

(Part III)

● Symptoms and Diagnosis

High blood cholesterol usually does not have any signs or symptoms. Many people don't know that their cholesterol levels are too high. Everyone age 20 and older should have their cholesterol levels checked at least once every 5 years. If your cholesterol level is high, you will have to be tested more often. You and your doctor should discuss how often you should be tested.

Your doctor will take a sample of blood from a vein in your arm and send it to the laboratory to find out the level of cholesterol in your blood. The recommended test is called a lipoprotein profile. It will show your

- total cholesterol
- LDL (bad) cholesterol, the main source of cholesterol buildup and blockage in your arteries
- HDL (good) cholesterol, which helps keep cholesterol from building up in your arteries
- triglycerides another form of fat in your blood.

You should not eat or drink anything except water or black coffee for 9 to 12 hours before taking the test. If you can't have a lipoprotein profile done, a different blood test will tell you your total cholesterol and HDL (good) cholesterol levels. You do not have to fast before this test. If this test shows that your total cholesterol is 200 mg/dL or higher, or that your HDL (good) cholesterol is less than 40 mg/dL, you will need to have a lipoprotein profile done. Cholesterol levels are measured in milligrams (mg) of cholesterol per deciliter (dL) of blood.

A lipoprotein profile will also show the level of triglycerides in your blood. Triglycerides are another kind of fat that your liver makes. They can also signal an increased chance of developing heart disease. Normal levels of triglycerides are less than 150 mg/dL. If your triglyceride levels are borderline high (150-199 mg/dL) or high (200 mg/dL or more) you may need treatment.

Some things that can increase your triglyceride levels include

- overweight
- physical inactivity
- cigarette smoking
- excessive alcohol use
- diabetes